

local political movements and work all back channels to build and amplify support for the SOFA in the coming weeks.

Look for a face-saving resolution. Karzai clearly cares deeply about the SOFA, however misplaced his actions, so providing him a graceful means of de-escalation is important. While some policymakers have staunchly insisted that Karzai must sign the accord, sheer adamancy failed in the final days of Iraq's SOFA. Indeed, if Karzai is seeking to prove his independence from Washington, then publicly insisting that he obey U.S. diktats is not necessarily helpful. It would be better to look for a few relatively harmless concessions to offer Karzai, or frame discussions so as to allow him to fall back upon the loya jirga's decision.

But ultimately, the United States needs to be ready to walk away. The aim of U.S. policy is not to keep troops in Afghanistan indefinitely—the goal is to cooperate on security in mutually beneficial and comparatively modest ways, and that can be done without boots on the ground. If Karzai is unwilling to accept reasonable terms that his own negotiators and loya jirga have approved, then the United States should prepare to protect its interests through other means. At this point, the zero option is entirely realistic and might even yield more favorable negotiating terms with Karzai's successor.

BENGHAZI

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF) for 5 minutes.

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, yesterday marked the 15-month anniversary of the Benghazi attack. Once again, another anniversary has come and gone with no new answers about what happened that night or just what so many Americans, reportedly around two dozen, were doing at a secret CIA base in Benghazi to begin with.

Another anniversary has come and gone with no new public hearings. By my count, the last public hearing was held on September 18, nearly 3 months ago, and no new public hearings are being held. The keyword is "public."

But perhaps most important, another anniversary has come and gone with absolutely no one being held responsible for the security and intelligence failures leading up to the attack, and no one has been brought to justice. And despite several recent developments related to the Benghazi investigation, practically nothing has been done in Congress to address them.

First, we have recently learned that CIA Director John Brennan distorted the facts in letters to the House Intelligence Committee and me when he claimed that Benghazi survivors were not made to sign new nondisclosure agreements.

Another major development is a November 24 article published by Breitbart reporting surprising new comments by Kevin Kolby, the FBI's lead investigator for Benghazi, who stated for the first time that the FBI arrived on the scene in Benghazi within days, not weeks, of the attack. According to the article by Kerry Picket:

The Washington Post reported that while the FBI had legats in Algiers and Cairo, a

team of FBI investigators could not get into Benghazi 2 days after the attack. Kolby disputes this. "We were there," he said.

Is Agent Kolby correct? Was the FBI secretly on the ground in Benghazi within days of the attack? If so, why is this being kept from the public? Once again, the Congress should know and, to my knowledge, has never asked Agent Kolby to testify.

Equally important, why is it that we are learning additional comments before a paid audience of \$400 a ticket? You had to pay \$400 to hear this guy speak, but he has never spoken for free to the American people. This is just like when the American people heard new information about that night from retired General Ham when he appeared at a big-ticket event in Aspen. The American people did not hear. If you paid the money in Aspen, you got to hear. I guess there was no need to tell the Congress and the public what happened that night since paid audiences will hear through conferences, through books, and maybe even a movie.

Finally, I return to my concerns first raised on the House floor in July that the large CIA base in Benghazi may have been used to support covert operations with regard to Syria, including the possible transfer of weapons collected in Libya to Syrian rebels, possibly in coordination with third parties of foreign countries, particularly Saudi Arabia.

These concerns need to be addressed now more than ever after reports yesterday that both the U.S. and the United Kingdom have cut off support to rebels in northern Syria along the Turkish border after the Islamic front, a coalition of jihadi extremist fighters, overran bases run by the Free Syrian Army and seized their weapons and resources. According to a report from the BBC yesterday, the U.S. and European countries have reportedly facilitated secret arms shipments to Syrian rebels, allegedly including antiaircraft weapons commonly referred to as "MANPADS," just like the weapons collected in Libya over the last 2 years.

A separate Washington Post article stated:

A covert CIA program providing lethal aid to the rebels, consisting mostly of small arms and ammunition channeled to southern Syria through Jordan, would continue unchanged.

It is particularly noteworthy that during the same period of time the CIA was operating in Benghazi and U.S. weapons collection in Libya were underway, respected national security reporter Mark Hosenball wrote August 1, 2012:

President Obama has signed a secret order authorizing U.S. support for rebels seeking to depose Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and his government. U.S. sources familiar with the matter said. Obama's order, approved earlier this year and known as an intelligence "finding," broadly permits the CIA and other U.S. agencies to provide support that could help the rebels oust Assad.

Hosenball continued:

A U.S. Government source acknowledged that under provisions of the Presidential

finding, the United States was collaborating with a secret command center operated by Turkey and its allies. NBC said the shoulder-fired missiles, also known as MANPADS, had been delivered to the rebels via Turkey.

Are these the same secret arms shipments that were just seized by the Islamic extremists in northern Syria? Have these weapons, transferred with alleged U.S. covert support, been used to kill innocent civilians, Christians, and Muslims? Don't the American people have a right to know if their tax dollars are being spent to supply Islamic extremists with weapons to use against Christians and Muslims? We need a select committee. The current process is not working.

It is time for the administration and the Congress to say what the CIA was doing in Benghazi and elsewhere around Syria.

A Wall Street Journal article from August detailed just how closely Saudi Arabia was working with the CIA to train and arm Syrian rebels, despite some concerns that the weapons could fall in the hands of the extremists.

It appears those concerns are coming true, but the American people still aren't being told the truth about the U.S. role in arming the Syrians and the role of the CIA base in Benghazi.

It's time for answers.

It's time for a select committee on Benghazi.

DO-NOTHING CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, this Republican-controlled Congress has been one of the least productive Congresses in modern times. Recently, the Speaker of the House actually said, "We've done our work." This year we passed only 56 bills. That is sad and that is wrong. And this month, we are in session here on this floor for only 8 days.

Important issues continue to pile up, unresolved and unanswered. And yet tomorrow, we are getting ready to leave for the rest of the year, even as the Senate will continue to work on behalf of the American people. The list of what we have not done is much longer than what we have passed. We need to stay here and get the work of the American people done.

We haven't taken up a jobs and infrastructure bill. We could do that next week.

We have not passed a long-term budget deal that tackles the big issues that we face.

We have not voted on comprehensive immigration reform, despite the fact that a majority would support immigration reform. All we need to do is bring it to the floor. We could do that next week.

We haven't done our work to extend unemployment compensation for 1.3 million Americans who will lose their benefits on December 28, yet we are going to leave this body having failed to act to protect the livelihood of 1.3 million Americans. That is just wrong.

We haven't considered raising the minimum wage, despite the economic

boon that it would be to give millions of working class people more purchasing power, supporting business, and supporting economic growth.

And we have a bipartisan farm bill. Sure it has got some problems. I don't know how everybody would vote on it, but it ought to come to the floor of the House for a "yes" or "no" vote. We could do that next week.

The list goes on. Unfortunately, it is completely fair to characterize this Republican-led House as a do-nothing Congress. Sometimes, though, it seems as though the things we have actually done have only made things worse.

In March, we allowed the harmful across-the-board sequester cuts to go into effect. Nobody here tried to stop them. On our side, we tried to stop them. Nobody did anything on the other side. Those draconian cuts went into effect, slowed economic growth, and cost hundreds of thousands of Americans their jobs.

In October, the gridlock and dysfunction shut down the Federal Government for 2 weeks—the first such shutdown in two decades. That cost this economy \$24 billion. We can't let that happen in the future.

I am only a freshman, just finishing my first year in Congress, but I can tell you one thing I know: this is no way to run this government. We have got to get back to legislating, doing the work of the American people, the way the Framers of this government intended it to be done.

□ 1030

We can just kind of go back. Some of you might remember "Schoolhouse Rock," how a bill becomes a law. The House passes a bill, the Senate does its work, passes a bill, we go to conference, we work out the differences, and send that on to the President for his signature or for a veto. That is the way we legislate.

Yet, we continue to lurch from crisis to crisis and not let the will of the American people be manifest in the laws that we write. My constituents, and all Americans, deserve a Congress that is serious about the work of the American people and ready to get to work to grow our economy, to support manufacturing, to strengthen the middle class.

I am ready to work in a bipartisan fashion. I think most of us are here to take on these big problems that our country faces. Now is not the time for more dithering or delay. Now is certainly not the time for a vacation.

Look, I would love to be able to go home and spend the next couple of weeks with my family. You know, we spend a lot of time away from home. But the folks that we represent expect us to get our work done.

So I, Mr. Speaker, am one who is willing to just stay here. Let's come back to work on Monday, and let's stay here until we get this important work done.

Let's take the Make It In America agenda to support American manufac-

turing; let's bring it to the floor. You don't want to vote for it, don't vote for it. But we ought to consider these important pieces of legislation that are important to our economy and not leave town without taking up the important work that we are charged with doing.

I represent Flint, Saginaw, Bay City, older industrial cities that helped build the manufacturing base of our economy. They depend on the Congress to do the work that we were sent here to do. We shouldn't go home. We should stay here and finish our work.

IRAN NEGOTIATIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. ELLISON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, for 34 years, the United States and Iran have had no diplomatic relations. Iran has escalated its nuclear weapons program and hostile rhetoric.

The United States has upped sanctions and threats of military force. There can be little doubt that, when our diplomats and politicians say all options are on the table, we mean military force.

And yet, today, under the leadership of President Obama, we have an opportunity to change all that, to avoid the prospect of war or a nuclear-armed Iran. We have a chance to set a new course, a new path. Instead of the collision course, we have an off-ramp, an off-ramp to peace, diplomacy and international cooperation; and we must take it.

This is our best opportunity in 30 years to advance the interests of the United States vis-à-vis Iran. It is our best chance to make sure that the Middle East is as free and safe as possible of nuclear weapons.

The Iranian people defied the odds and elected a moderate President, Hassan Rouhani. President Rouhani has condemned the inflammatory rhetoric of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. He has promised to improve Iran's relationship to the West.

Now, instead of moving forward toward the brink of war, the United States and Iran are negotiating, talking; and this is a good thing. This is the way countries should pursue their interests. This is the way to avoid war.

Through diplomacy, the United States and its allies have frozen Iran's nuclear program for the first time in more than a decade. The agreement imposes daily inspections to ensure Iran will not develop a nuclear weapon, and Iran has made agreements to move this process forward.

Ending our decades-long cold war with Iran isn't going to happen overnight; but through robust, sustained diplomacy, we may prevent an Iranian nuclear weapon and disastrous war and spare thousands of our children and theirs from a horrible situation.

We cannot achieve these goals if Congress undermines these negotiations,

and I have supported sanctions in the past. In fact, I have a very good friend and constituent who is in the Chamber today who has supported sanctions. She was born and raised in Iran, is very concerned about the human rights situation there, and has informed me over the years about the best position that I might take. And she also says now is not the time to hit the accelerator; it is the time to let diplomacy work.

These sanctions would undermine the confidence of our international partners, including the P5+1. China, Russia, the United States, Germany, and France are all part of this negotiation with Iran. And if we up sanctions while we have claimed that we want to work with them to have a reduction in nuclear weaponry in Iran, they may well see this as a break and a breach of faith with them, which could set us all back.

It has not been easy to get Iran, Russia, and China to the table. We have them there. Let's not lose this chance.

New sanctions stand to kill any hope for diplomacy. Iran's Foreign Minister, Javad Zarif, has said that if Congress imposes new sanctions, "the entire deal is dead."

Is that what we want?

New sanctions will not increase our negotiating power. If they would, the White House certainly would have told us so. In fact, the White House has warned that new sanctions will undermine negotiations.

Negotiations over the next 6 months are the only way to guarantee that Iran will not develop a nuclear weapon and will set itself on a path to rejoin the world of nations. And this could well improve the human rights situation in Iran, as it has no justification for the police state which denies human rights.

Congress should give diplomats space to do their jobs. Undercutting diplomacy with new sanctions would put our country on the path to war.

The choice is clear. We can try to negotiate a deal that prevents an Iranian nuclear weapon and avoids a nuclear conflict, or we can dismiss this opportunity, pile on more sanctions, derail diplomacy, and continue toward war.

Americans don't want another war. The best way to honor our men and women in uniform is to avoid unnecessary war. My son is Active Duty military. I am speaking from a personal place as well.

Americans support a negotiated deal with Iran by a 2-1 ratio; 68 percent say Congress should not take action that would block an agreement.

Passing any punitive measures, including a sense of Congress tying the President's hands, is a mistake. It will not help; and if Congress wants to help, we should set up a people-to-people exchange. We should set up a Congress-to-Congress exchange and move forward.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded not to make reference to occupants of the gallery.